DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 375 521 EA 026 233

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TITLE In the Service of What? The Politics of Service Learning.
PUB DATE Jun 94
NOTE 35p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 4-8, 1994). Print is of uneven quality.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Altruism; *Community Services; Elementary Secondary Education; Ideology; Moral Values; *Policy Analysis; Politics of Education; *Social Action; *Social Change; *Student Projects
IDENTIFIERS *Service Learning

ABSTRACT

With the current interest and allocation of resources accorded service learning comes a growing need to clarify the varied ideological perspectives on school and society that underline service learning activities and programs. Drawing on an evaluation of Stanford's Service Learning 2000 project and on a rhetorical analysis of policy talk on service learning, this paper proposes a conceptual scheme that highlights these complexities. It seeks to clarify the ideological, political, and social goals and assumptions embedded in the policy and practice of service learning. Two examples of service learning projects funded in part by the Stanford Service Learning 2000 minigrants program are highlighted. Data were obtained from interviews with and surveys of teachers and students, classroom observations, and project reports submitted by the teachers. The first project stressed charity and the cultivation of civic duty and altruism among the students. The second project focused on transformative education, using systemic and critical analysis to bring about social change. Findings distinguish among the moral, political, and pedagogical goals that motivate supporters of service learning--the moral domain, the political domain, and the pedagogical domain. Although charity is an admirable goal, educators must ask the questions "who and for what?" By focusing on charity rather than change, by emphasizing noncontroversial issues, and by framing controversial issues in noncontroversial ways, educators forego many opportunities for meaningful, reflective analysis and transformative experiences. By linking social analysis and action, service learning frameworks can facilitate powerful educational experiences. (LMI)

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IN THE SERVICE OF WHAT?
THE POLITICS OF SERVICE LEARNING

June 22, 1994

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting
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New Orleans, Louisiana, April, 1994.

A real humanist can be identified more by his trust in the people, which engages him in their struggle, than by a thousand actions in their favor without that trust (Friere, 47).

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In his inaugural address, President John Kennedy challenged the Nation with his well-known appeal: "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." Two decades later, when running against Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan asked "Are you better off today than you were four years ago?" If Kennedy's exhortation reflected the idealism and sense of collective mission that characterized the tumultuous 1960s, Reagan's question epitomized the individualism and materialism of the 1980s. Now the tide seems to be turning again as notions of national service re-emerge in both rhetoric and action. "In service," announced President Clinton last year as his national service legislation was signed into law, "we recognize a powerful truth -- we need each other."

Service learning initiatives for schools have been bolstered by the renewed national interest in community service. Educators and legislators alike maintain that service learning can improve the community, invigorate the classroom, and provide rich educational experiences for students at all levels of schooling. A form of experiential education, service learning makes students active participants in service projects which aim to respond to community needs. Students in a service learning project might analyze and monitor the composition of nearby swamplands or produce an oral history of their community. They may work with the homeless or initiate a cross-age tutoring project. In addition to helping those they serve, service learning activities seek to promote self-esteem and higher order thinking skills,

draw on multiple abilities, and provide authentic learning experiences -- all goals of current curriculum reform efforts.

Recognizing the potential of service learning, policy-makers, legislators, and educators have promoted initiatives at the local, state, and national level. The National and Community Service Act of 1990 and President Clinton's National Service Trust act of 1993 are some recent and far-reaching examples of this trend. In addition, cities such as Atlanta and Los Angeles and states such as Maryland, Vermont, and Pennsylvania all have major service learning initiatives underway. Millions of dollars are targeted for educators around the country and many service learning initiatives are making significant headway.

As is commonly the case with new policy initiatives, however, more attention has been focused on moving forward than on asking where we should be headed. To gain support for their agenda, proponents of service learning have worked to find common ground among Democrats and Republicans, conservatives and liberals, business leaders and community activists. Controversial issues surrounding the means and ends of service learning have been pushed to the background. Edward Kennedy, Bill Clinton, George Bush, William F. Buckley, and Ralph Nader are all strong advocates of service learning in the Nation's schools.

There are costs as well as benefits to such coalitions. While service learning advocates rush to forge coalitions and find a shared vocabulary that accommodates multiple agendas, and

while practitioners and researchers begin to work on complex issues of implementation and evaluation, educators from schoolhouse to university to statehouse are neglecting a more fundamental concern: In the service of what? What values do service learning curricula model and seek to promote? What kind of social and political relations do they ask students to imagine? What do service activities teach students about our society and about strategies for creating a better world? What kinds of relationships develop between students and those in need? What kind of society does service learning lead students to work towards?

With the current interest and allocation of resources accorded service learning comes a growing need to clarify the varied ideological perspectives on school and society that underlie service learning activities and programs. Drawing on our evaluation of Stanford's Service Learning 2000 project and on a rhetorical analysis of policy talk on service learning, we propose a conceptual scheme that highlights these complexities. Our goal is not to replace consensus with conflict, but rather to clarify the ideological, political and social goals and assumptions embedded in the policy and practice of service learning.

Two Service Learning Cases[2]

Consider "Serving Those in Need," Mr. Johnson's project for his twelfth grade U.S. Government class. As the class studied issues surrounding democracy and citizenship, Mr. Johnson had his students participate in community service projects of their own choosing. One student, for example, worked in a center for babies whose mothers had high levels of crack cocaine in their bloodstream during pregnancy. Another helped patients at a hospital find the right place for their appointments and ran errands for doctors. A third student prepared and donated survival kits for the homeless. By finding and engaging in community service activities, Mr. Johnson explained, students interact with those less fortunate than themselves and experience the excitement and joy of learning while using the community as a classroom.

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Ms. Adams, a seventh grade teacher at Lexington Middle School, took a different approach. After surveying the student body on issues of concern, Ms. Adams and her students voted to focus their energy on the issue of homelessness. Their service learning unit, "Homelessness Here and Elsewhere," examined the complex issue of homelessness around the world and in the local

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[2]These examples of service learning projects come from a year-long study of service learning initiatives funded in part by the Stanford Service Learning 2000 mini-grants program. The data reflects interviews and surveys of teachers and students, classroom observations, and project reports submitted by the teachers. We would like to thank participants in the mini-grants program. Names of teachers and schools are pseudonyms.

school community. Ms. Adams, and her class of 28 students researched this topic, exploring its social, economic, legal and political determinants. They invited speakers from homeless advocacy groups, created files of newspaper articles on homelessness and read, among other pieces, No Place to Be: Voices of Homeless Children. Next they developed action plans to aid relief efforts for the homeless in their own communities and they raised funds for two homeless advocacy groups the class selected. During class and small group discussions and also in writing, they reflected on the readings, the invited speakers, and their own experiences working on the project.

Two Orientations: Charity and Change

Mr. Johnson's and Ms. Adams' service learning projects have much in common. The students in both made connections with the larger community and they provided a service for identified groups, reflecting on, and writing about their experiences. Both sets of activities facilitated authentic learning experiences, reflection on matters of social concern, and opportunities for interdisciplinary study. Moreover, the goals of both projects have broad based appeal. They stress the importance of compassion for those in need and of helping others.

But what of the differences? The approach to service learning taken by Mr. Johnson and others stresses charity and the ways that participating in service and reflection can develop in students a sense of altruism. Involving students in community-

based work, these service learning proponents maintain, promotes a willingness and desire to provide for those in need of assistance. Mr. Johnson's students gave their time and energy to help individuals and groups in need, either directly (the student who helped patients in a hospital find their appointments, for example) or indirectly (preparing survival kits for the homeless). Mr. Johnson's curriculum included only minimal attention to any systemic analysis of the ills his students were helping to alleviate, focusing instead on inculcating a sense of civic duty. Since the students all worked on different issues and in different positions, their reflections focused on the benefits of service generally and the proper role of volunteerism and good will in a democracy. His high school seniors were not asked to articulate an understanding of the conditions and contexts that might have contributed to the homeless family losing its home or the pregnant mother turning to crack cocaine. While many students expressed interest in continued volunteer service, they did not investigate the root causes of these social problems, the sense in which they are embedded in our social structure, or the possibility of any responses which go beyond volunteering and aid for those in need.

Ms. Adam's students, on the other hand, worked collectively on one project and began with a systemic and critical analysis of homelessness and strategies employed to prevent it. Educators like Ms. Adams see service learning as a method of transformative education. By engaging their classes in real-world problems,

they assert, teachers can foster in students a capacity for critical analysis of complex social issues and cultivate the desire and ability to pursue changes in society. The discussions in Ms. Adams' class focused on the growing economic disparity between rich and poor, the impact of homelessness on children, and the difficult balance between individual rights and collective responsibility. Students, for example, read stories by homeless children and wrote essays assessing the impact of homelessness on people like themselves. They also considered ways in which both individuals and the government could respond to this problem. "The government should open up clinics," one of her seventh graders wrote, "that help homeless people get jobs and a place to live. The schools should have food drives to help keep the clinics stocked with food."

These two orientations (and they are by no means neatly distinct from one another) have a long history in educational discourse. Early proponents of the "project method" and other curriculum which often included a service component emphasized change. For John Dewey (1900; 1915), William Kilpatrick (1918), George Counts (1932), Paul Hanna (1936), and others, the transformative potential of this approach was of prime importance. These curriculum theorists and educational reformers wanted students engaged in service learning projects because they wanted students to recognize that their academic abilities and collective commitments could help them respond in meaningful ways to a variety of social concerns.

For Dewey, this was the essence of democratic education. He argued for the creation of "miniature communities" in which students worked together to identify and respond to problems they confronted (1900). The value of this approach extended far beyond the service students might provide for the elderly or the analytic skills they might develop when addressing environmental problems; it lay primarily in the social orientation it fostered. Students learned to critically assess and respond collectively to matters of social consequence. Perhaps most importantly, their own values and beliefs might be transformed by these experiences. As Lawrence Cremin (1988) explains, these educators believed that "by manipulating the school curriculum they could ultimately change the world" (187). Thus, George Counts titled his widely read book, Dare the Schools Build a New Social Order.

In contrast, much of the current discussion regarding service learning, emphasizes charity, not change. The claim regarding the relation of service learning to the development of altruistic individuals is relatively simple to articulate and in many respects compelling. By engaging students in meaningful service activities, whether tutoring children for whom English is a second language, helping patients in a hospital, doing difficult chores for the elderly, or supervising younger children's recreational activities, students will have opportunities to experience what David Hornbeck, former Maryland state superintendent, refers to as "the joy of reaching out to others" (in Harrison, 1987, 2). Many students left Mr. Johnson's

project, for example, aware of the contributions they could make towards helping others and eager to continue the work they began as part of the course. This is the argument advanced also by Ernest Boyer, President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. He believes that "altruism can best be appreciated as an experience rather than an abstraction" (1987, ix). He endeavors to create "a new Carnegie unit" -- a requirement that all students take part in volunteer activities in either their school or community as a condition for graduation from high school.

Three Domains: Moral, Political, and Pedagogical

Just as the difference between change and charity may provide an important conceptual distinction for those analyzing service learning curriculum, it is helpful to distinguish the moral, political, and pedagogical goals that motivate those who support service learning.

SERVICE LEARNING GOALS

	MORAL	POLITICAL	PEDAGOGICAL
CHARITY	Giving	Responsive Citizens	Authentic & Active Learning
CHANGE	Caring	Critical Democrats	Transformative Pedagogy

First, in the moral domain, service learning activities tend towards two types of relationship. Relationships with an

orientation towards charity, we will call "giving." Those that seek to deepen relationships and to forge new connections, we will call "caring." In caring relationships, Nel Noddings (1984) writes, we try to consider the life and disposition of those for whom we are caring. We attempt to "apprehend the reality of the other" and then to "struggle [for progress] together" (14, 15). In so doing, we create opportunities for transforming our understanding of the other and the context within which he or she lives.

In the political domain, the intentions of those promoting service learning activities draw from two underlying assumptions about political socialization and what it means to be a citizen. Those who focus on charity, believe that to be properly educated in a democracy, students require experiences that demonstrate the value of altruism and the dangers of exclusive self-interest. They emphasize civic duty and the need for responsive citizens. Compassion for the less fortunate and volunteerism are the undergirding conceptions of political socialization associated with this vision.

The notion of political socialization embedded in other service learning activities reveal fundamentally different assumptions about the requirements of citizenship. Some who promote service learning hope to move students towards participation in the type of "strong democracy" that Benjamin Barber (1984) speaks of and the democratic community that Dewey envisioned. These proponents call for a curriculum that

emphasizes communal attachments, critical and collective reflection, and skills of political action and social transformation.

Third, service learning curriculum can further numerous pedagogical goals. By engaging students with real world issues and by giving them a sense that their studies enable them to respond meaningfully to others in need, many reformers agree that service learning can provide powerful motivation and richer, more authentic learning experiences. The ability of service learning curriculum to foster authentic learning opportunities, to help students engage higher order thinking skills in contextually varied environments, and to promote interdisciplinary studies has led some, like John Brisco, to label service learning, "the Trojan horse of school reform." The service component may help us get the support needed for implementation, he argues, but its real impact is seen in its ability to promote powerful learning environments.

Educators who emphasize change would clearly also value the benefits of this approach. Its impact on student motivation and its provision for authentic learning experiences make it a welcome addition to traditional pedagogical practices. To tap into the full power of this approach, however, practitioners who follow the work of Paulo Friere or John Dewey, for example, would want to employ service learning activities as a means of combining critical inquiry with meaningful actions. This process can transform students' understandings of both disciplinary

knowledge and the particular social issues with which students are engaged.

The table on the previous page displays the intersection of the two orientations (change and charity) with moral, political, and pedagogical goals. We do not mean to imply that the contents of the table are each discrete categories. As we will show, the underlying goals and impact of a given service learning activity can embody commitments to both change and charity and can have relevance for one, two, or three of the different domains. Even from a theoretical standpoint these domains are not discrete -- moral, political, and pedagogical goals are intertwined. Similarly, the same activities may be experienced quite differently by different students. Nonetheless, consideration of these different categories can help clarify our understanding of the possible relationships between service learning activities, their outcomes and the goals that motivate their design.

Moral Domain: Giving and Caring

Many who advocate service learning consider its potential as a means of promoting moral development (Cognetta and Sprinhall Sprinthall 1978; Etzioni, 1993). In many service learning projects, the emphasis is on giving and on countering the narcissism which is believed to be so prevalent among our youth and in the society generally. The sentiment that educators should foster a volunteer ethic encouraging youth to give back to

their school or community currently receives widespread support. It is voiced by many educators (Boyer, 1983; Conrad and Hedin, 1991; Nathan and Kielsmeier, 1991) and by politicians such as Edward Kennedy (1991) who points out, for example, that "90% of 14 to 17-year-olds who had been asked to volunteer did so" (772). The image, made famous by George Bush, is of "a thousand points of light" which represent the innumerable ways in which citizens and, in this case, students can respond to our Nation's social problems.

Let's return now to the students in Mr. Johnson's class who chose their own service projects. In addition to the three examples we described earlier, several students elected to serve food to veterans, the elderly, or the homeless. Reflecting on her experience in the Veterans' Memorial Senior Center, one student wrote,

> For Thanksgiving this year my stepmother and I helped serve the seniors their Thanksgiving dinner. This was a very rewarding experience helping others in need. It seemed that the dinner to them was something special to them, it was a chance for them to get together with their peers. Many don't have families in the area and are all alone for the holidays. This made it a little less lonely, which feels great. Thank you for giving me the chance to help!

This experience and others like it, quite common in the service literature, focus on charity rather than change. The student's interpretation of the event lacks the perspective and input of those she was helping. The experience helped students understand the importance of giving, but did not provide the kind of understanding needed for the development of caring

relationships. Similarly, the student in Mr. Johnson's class who assembled "Daily Life Kits" which he then distributed to homeless persons in San Francisco determined the kit's contents without ever talking with homeless individuals or even with someone who had knowledge on the subject[3]. He experienced the joys of service, but not opportunities for meaningful interactions through which caring relationships and understanding might develop.

When I care, Noddings (1984) explains, a relationship develops in which "the other's reality becomes a real possibility for me" (14). The distance between the one caring and the cared for diminish. Consider this report from a student James Youniss (1994) studied in Washington D.C.

> The best moment of the day for me was when the soup kitchen was over, and I went to the hot dog stand and I saw a man, which I had served in the soup kitchen earlier, sitting on the bench. So I bought him a hot dog and we talked for about 15 minutes. He told me he was homeless for the simple fact that he was laid off. That was the first time I truly interacted with a homeless person before. He made me realize that no one is immune to it (Youniss, 5).

Although this one interaction does not necessarily indicate a caring relationship, it clearly permitted an exchange through which the student's understanding of the other's reality could begin to develop. Unfortunately, in many service activities, students view those they serve as a clients rather than a resource. Often, the emphasis on serving crowds out

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[3] The content of the kits were items for personal grooming (a comb, a razor, a toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, and shampoo). They also included a small Bible.

opportunities for the kind of respectful interaction that might build relationships of trust, understanding, and action.

While noting this problem, it is also extremely important to underscore the potential of activities that focus on "giving" to move students closer to caring relationships, especially when compared to traditional academic experiences. At one site we studied, for example, a music director wanted her students to perform at a nearby elementary school in a very poor neighborhood. Some of the middle school parents objected saying they were concerned for their children's safety. In a written evaluation, the students said that they had expected,

> "...horrifying children running around on a dirty campus."
> "...kids to be rude, tough, noisy and very unfriendly."
> "...the kids to be mean, gang related blacks."

"I was scared," one student wrote, "because my mom had told me it was a bad neighborhood and to be careful." After they returned students' perspective on the elementary school children had changed:

> "I was pleasantly surprised at the children's responsiveness and their attentiveness."
>
> The "children were extremely polite, and surprisingly friendly. They listened well and had excellent behavior."
>
> The "kids are pretty smart and want to play instruments."
>
> "Everyone at the school had good manners. I think more highly of [the neighborhood] now."

The experiential and interpersonal components of many service learning activities can achieve the first and very important step of diminishing the sense of "otherness" which often separates

students, particularly privileged students, from those in need.

Political Socialization: Responsible Citizens and Critical Democrats

Rather than tying service curriculum to moral development, some advocates of service learning talk about developing citizens for our democracy -- a traditional purpose of public education. While there is widespread commitment to this goal (Kennedy, 1991; Boyer, 1983; Barber, 1992; Isaac, 1992; Etzioni, 1993; Harrison, 1987), there are important differences in what people mean by "developing citizens." Some, merging the rhetoric of altruism with notions of citizenship, argue that good citizens should perform community service as a kind of charity. Many agree with Senator Edward Kennedy (1991) who writes that democracy "means ... the responsibility to give something back to America in return for all it has given us" (772). Similarly, the chief rationale for the Atlanta community service requirement was that it would ensure that students recognized, "the responsibility of good citizens to help others" (Harrison, 1987, 11). Mr. Johnson, sharing this logic, explains to parents and his students that he makes "community service...a vital part of the government course [because] part of citizenship is the practice of helping others in the community."

While requiring students to "serve America" (the rhetoric of the federal legislation) might produce a thousand points of light, it might also promote a thousand points of the status quo.

Educators may miss important opportunities if they disconnect the act of service from critical examination of the setting in which it occurs.

Recall the service project in which middle school students from an affluent community performed and met with elementary school students in a nearby poor community. As noted above, this interaction led students to report marked changes in their beliefs regarding children from this neighborhood. Moreover, when asked, "what did you gain from the experience?" many students said that "it taught me that people can be different than you expected." Some of the students also drew a wider critique.

> "[The neighborhood] isn't as bad as the news makes it out to be."
>
> "The rumors I have heard are a big bunch of hogwash... I'm glad I went on that trip because it was a wonderful experience to meet new people and find out about their life."
>
> "The kids in [the neighborhood] are not rude children that live in gangs. They are continually degraded by rumors in [our town] and I don't think it's fair to them."

These statements are testimony to the potential for service learning to prompt meaningful critical reflection on the part of students. In order to build on these insights, however, educators must work with students to carry out systematic and informed assessments of their experiences. In this music class, these sentiments were never explored. Doing so, would tap into the transformative potential of this curricular approach.

It is also important to recognize that an emphasis on

altruism and charity is often used to back a conservative political agenda. Note George Bush's rhetoric as he voiced his support for the National Community Services Act of 1990,

> I am particularly pleased that [this act] will promote an ethic of community service...Government cannot rebuild a family or reclaim a sense of neighborhood, and no bureaucratic program will ever solve the pressing human problems that can be addressed by a vast galaxy of people working voluntarily in their own backyards (in Radest, 8, 1993).

Voluntary community service was advanced as an alternative to government programs. No mention was made of changes that address the structural injustices that leave so many in need. This kind of service also runs the risk of being understood as a kind of noblesse oblige -- a private act of kindness performed by the privileged.

For some educators, notions of civic education imply a link between collective service and critical reflection. Like Dewey, these educators understand democracy to be much more than a set of political institutions. For them, a democratic way of life requires that citizens respond to needs in their community, but also, that they engage with other community members to consider both the nature of those needs and a broad range of possible responses. Their critique of those who emphasize charity is twofold. First, this orientation fails to acknowledge, examine or respond to structural problems. The student who served meals to the elderly on Thanksgiving, for example, did not consider the causes or circumstances which placed people in this institution, separated from family and friends, nor any of the general

questions which surround our culture's treatment of the elderly. Second, the emphasis on charity fosters an individual rather than a collective analysis and response to social needs. Benjamin Barber (1992) argues that the lack of connection between individual rights and obligations within our culture has left us with a bankrupt sense of citizenship. The emphasis of service proponents on altruism and charity fails to call into question current notions of individuals and does little to develop our sense of membership in society. "Democratic politics has become something we watch rather than something we do" (235). Our participation in acts of national service, he believes, "is an indispensable prerequisite of citizenship and thus a condition for democracy's preservation" (260).

> The thousand points of light through which the lucky serve the needy may help illuminate our humanity, but they cannot warm or nurture our common soul, nor create a sense of common responsibility connected to our liberty, nor provide integral solutions to structural problems. The model is compassion or charity, whose consequences are [not obligatory] and thus can never be the subject of political duties (235).

This, then, is a fundamental critique of those who market the importance of service learning by referencing both the motivation and joy which comes from giving and the importance of altruism. Barber would disagree with Hedin when she writes, "Maybe this [community service] is what citizenship is all about, acting in a decent way toward people who live where we live" (in Harrison, 1987, 5). Citizenship in a democratic community requires more than kindness and decency, it requires engagement in complex social and institutional endeavors. Acts of civic duty can not

replace government programs or forms of collective social action. Citizenship requires that individuals work to create, evaluate, criticize, and changed public institutions and programs. Such action is unavoidably political. Thus Harry Boyte (1991) is critical of current conceptions of service because they meet students' "needs for personal relevance and a sense of membership in a community. [But] volunteers usually disavow concern with larger policy questions, seeing service as an **alternative** to politics" (his emphasis, 766). This attitude is reflected in the words of a Stanford University undergraduate which were included in the William T. Grant Foundation's influential report The Forgotten Half.

> Students tutor, coach softball, paint playgrounds, and read to the elderly because they are interested in people, or because they want to learn a little about poverty and racism before they head out into the waiting corporate world. Or else they volunteer because they see their friends doing it, and it turns out to be fun... We do not volunteer 'to make a statement,' or to use the people we work with to protest something. We try to see the homeless man, the hungry child, and the dying woman as the people they are, not the means to some political end (1988, 81).

Those oriented towards change, embrace the importance of political activity. Harry Boyte (1991), for example, believes that service activities should develop students' abilities at "public speaking, recruiting other students, organizing meetings, analyzing problems, developing action plans, and conducting evaluations" (767).

Ms. Adams' project, "Homelessness, Here and Elsewhere," included many of these elements. The class read books and

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articles on homelessness and in the process deepened their understanding of both the personal and structural dynamics which led to homelessness and the ways in which children experience the problem. In small cooperative groups, after developing action plans to help address the problem in their community, students designed and implemented fund raising strategies and researched, through calls and letters, organizations to receive their donation. In short, this process permitted students to read a variety of materials on the social problem of homelessness, broaden their understanding of its causes and its impact, and work together designing and implementing an action plan.

The curriculum developed by Katharine Isaac (1992) titled, Civics for Democracy: A Journey for Teachers and Students illustrates some of what this approach might imply for today's high school students. The first section focuses on profiles of students in action. It describes the efforts of high school students in Florida to limit deforestation in the southern part of their state, an effort by students in Fargo North Dakota to boycott the institutionalization of Whittle Communications' "Channel One" (a television news program that includes paid advertisements), energy patrols in Washington DC and a variety of other efforts that provide students with a sense of how much student activism can accomplish. The curriculum also includes opportunities to study the history of various citizen movements (civil rights movement, labor movement, women's rights movement, consumer movement, environmental movement). They examine both

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the substantive themes of these movements, and the strategies actors with diverse agendas employed. In addition, there is a section of curriculum focusing specifically on "techniques for participation" that examines different kinds of citizen action such as pamphleteering, writing reports and surveys, and holding public hearings. Numerous ideas for change oriented student projects that include research and action are also explored. These projects range from evaluating the representativeness of juries, to evaluating the evening news, to improving availability of child care. This curriculum highlights the explicitly political nature of service and community action, teaches meaningful skills in a systematic nature, and integrates these ideas with academic investigations. It is a model that seems particularly likely to help foster citizens engaged in collective action and reflection.

Experiential Pedagogy: Authentic and Transformative

Given the educational focus of service learning activities, any analysis would be incomplete that did not consider the activities from the perspective of pedagogy. Service learning advocates agree that experiential, authentic, and active pedagogy is often powerful pedagogy. While an emphasis on charity might lead to service learning activities that raise self-esteem, impel students into experiences they would otherwise bypass, and let students know that they are needed and that they are capable of meaningful contributions to society (Conrad and Hedin, 1991),

educators focused on the transformative vision of William Kilpatrick or Paulo Friere would want to carry this work one step further. These educators would want the pedagogy tied to a systematic, academically informed, critical examination of the issues that surround the service environment. For them, it is the combination of service and critical analysis, not either on its own, that seems most likely to promote interest and insight into these complex social issues.

Of course, neither of these outcomes is assured. Both require careful planning and implementation. Consider, again, Mr. Johnson's service curriculum in which each student designed her own project. By providing materials and access to knowledgeable speakers, he exposed them to possible service ideas, but ultimately students had to make their own arrangements. The focus and quality of the projects they developed varied enormously. Some students became an integral part of an organization, others performed busy work. One student's project was to do chores around the house for her grandmother. Some students spoke of new insights. Others did not. There was no meaningful academic component to this project. It required simply that students submit a one or two paragraph summary of their efforts. Their grade depended primarily on the number of hours they volunteered. Thirty hours for an "A", twenty for a "B", ten for a "C".

It is perhaps testimony to the motivational impact of this approach that many of the students did interesting and productive

work despite the lack of meaningful guidance or supportive reflection. It is, however, troubling that students described Mr. Johnson as "a kick-back teacher" and that they reported that several students cheated on the assignment, despite its minimal requirements.

This example is particularly relevant, because its design mirrors large scale initiatives to promote community service around the country. The state of Maryland, for example, now requires that all high school students perform 75 hours of community service prior to graduation and the state of New York requires that students studying government take part in school, community, or a government practicum. In Atlanta students must complete 75 hours of volunteer service to graduate. There are also major efforts in Vermont, Pennsylvania, and Minnesota and the number of initiatives are growing. Some of these proposals work to integrate community service with course curriculum, others do not. In Atlanta, students simply write a 500 word essay describing their experiences. They never discuss their experiences as part of a course. Fred Newmann found that many service programs lack a scholastic component because of fears that such an orientation would diminish the focus on altruism (Harrison, 1987, 21). The importance of a meaningful academic component becomes clearer when one considers the kind of reflection and student empowerment such curriculum fosters.

Almost all discussions of service learning practices emphasize the importance of reflection. For the most part,

however, descriptions of reflective activities do not include the kind of critical analysis which might help students reach new understandings. Clearly, it is valuable to have students share their thoughts and experiences with one another. However, without informed and systematic analysis of these experiences, these reflective activities (commonly in the form of journal entries and discussions where students share their thoughts) may only reinforce previously held beliefs and simplistic, if generous, conclusions.[4]

Just as discussions of service learning's value often emphasize reflection, they commonly describe its potential impact on students' sense of empowerment. Support for "empowering" students comes both from those who believe empowerment is an important goal in its own right as well as from those who believe that a large part of the motivational impact of service arrangements stems from students' sense of empowerment.

Unlike most other scholastic activities, service learning pedagogy facilitates opportunities for students to be the provider rather than the provided-for. Service learning places young children in positions of responsibility and substance. They are listened to and viewed as capable of productive contribution. In some instances, however, empowerment may be

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[4] The Council of Chief State School Officers report on service learning, for example, states that "School-based community service programs should provide for a structured period for reflection after the service experience, when the students can think, talk, and\or write about what they saw and did" (5). They do not talk about the need to consider these experiences in relation to systematic academic work or data which focuses on these issues.

problematic. Engaging students, particularly privileged students, in service learning projects may add to their sense of privilege or esteem without leading to critical reflection on either the reasons service is needed, the nature of the service needed, or the reasons they are in this privileged position. As Harold Radest, the retired Director of the private, preparatory Fieldston schools in New York City, explains, "I realized that anyone doing community service was inevitably going to be in some kind of privileged position, if for no other reason than the fact that he or she was able to be a doer. Privilege, in other words, was a structural problem" (Radest, 24, 1993).

The most important outcomes of service activities for some students may in fact, not be empowerment, but dis-empowerment. Students may benefit most when they realize not how much they have to give, but how much they will gain when they listen and observe. Consider the analysis of this student who worked in a soup kitchen:

> Some people started a conversation. ... Others mumbled fine thank you and walked away. And some just bowed their heads sheepishly and said fine as if they were intimidated by me. Grown man intimidated by a young girl. I guess that's what living in an uncertain world does to you (Youniss, 1994, 7).

Watching and listening, more than serving and providing charity, may foster compassion and understanding as well as provide the impetus to study (more than reflect on) the structural and interpersonal dynamics which leave so many in need. As Paulo Friere writes,

No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain

> distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption (39).

Moreover, there is an important difference between programs working with students from privileged backgrounds and those from less privileged backgrounds. When speaking to students at an elite alternative boarding school, Maxine Greene told them that if they were to have any hope of doing good in the world they would have to "learn to listen to the voices of victims". Though a blanket statement would clearly overstate the case, empowering students who feel marginal to society may be more desirable than empowering those who feel secure in their position.

One project we studied highlights these issues. Ms. Lee teaches high school students for whom English is a second language. Demographics shifted dramatically in her school over the past five years and she now works primarily with children whose families come from Mexico and Central America. Towards the beginning of the semester, Ms. Lee invited an author of Mexican origins to read from his work to her students and to discuss with them the importance of telling ones own story. She then had these students write and illustrate their own children's books, many of which were autobiographical. After their own books were complete, her students traveled and read from their books and from some other children's books to elementary school students from their respective home neighborhoods. In many cases, her students had attended these schools. Each student made three

separate trips and spent several hours reading to different small groups of children. Her students also kept a journal in which they wrote about their experiences writing their own books and reading them to younger children.

Not surprisingly the benefits of this experience for her students were substantial. Students who rarely worked hard on their reading, now took books home to practice and many students described the pride they felt at the enthusiastic responses they received when they read to these children. Some of the books were magnificent. As one students put it, "The program is great. We got to read at different classrooms in different languages. I got to practice and the little kids that speak other languages see that they can be the one who reads later on." Several students asked if they could participate in the program after they left the class and a few students joined a community program where they continue reading to small children.

Ms. Lee's project motivated students to learn to read by providing a setting in which literacy skills were valuable. Simultaneously, it provided an opportunity for students to experience the contributions they can make to others in their community. The students' sense of empowerment came in large part through the creation of a setting in which students for whom academic competence was an enormous struggle were able to help others and from the valuing of their personal experiences as reflected in the attention paid to the books they created.

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Service is Political

The idea that a child's education should include service activities for their community is not new. The federal, state, and local initiatives aimed at promoting service learning, however, are new. The momentum and support achieved by service learning proponents have sparked countless initiatives throughout the country and widespread efforts to implement these different plans. In some cases, service learning has become an experiential add-on to the school day. Other service learning programs seek to be an integral part of the curriculum. Efforts to translate these ideals into practice have demanded reconsideration of disciplinary priorities and disciplinary boundaries, scheduling which includes large blocks of time, and conceptions of education that link learning to experiences outside of the classroom. Faced with such significant challenges, little attention has been given to the differing motivations and goals that underlie the planning and implementation of service learning projects. Is it beneficial to point out such differences and risk the fraying of a carefully forged national coalition of educators, policy-makers and politicians? We think so.

The most broadly supported (and therefore most politically tenable) goal for service learning activities is to convey to students the importance of charity -- acts of benevolence and good will to help the needy. If we focus on the "numerous values we share as a community," writes Amitai Etzioni, the founder of

the communitarian movement and a proponent of service learning (1993, p.97), "...our world would be radically improved." But, while such rhetoric may allow this political scientist to be a trusted adviser to congressmen on both sides of the aisle, it will not resolve the dilemmas facing practitioners who need to think carefully both about what a radically improved world might look like and about the different ways one might pursue this goal. In addition to ensuring that students serve, educators and advocates must also make sure that who and what they serve is worth serving.

As is true for any powerful pedagogy, avoiding questions of intents and purposes is risky. Service learning engages students in real issues and with real people and, therefore, engenders explicit commitments to particular values, beliefs and world views. Some service learning projects might foster a sense of noblesse oblige while others might highlight insistences in which well-meaning actors make matters worse. Some projects might emphasize vocational priorities, endorsing Pennsylvania Governor Casey's contention that "the qualities of a productive worker are the same as those of a good citizen" (in Briscoe, 1991, 759). Other projects might lead students to question their beliefs about the causes of unemployment and homelessness or the most effective allocation of resources in the effort to diminish drug abuse.

Service learning proponents too often ignore the moral, political and pedagogical significance of these differences. By

emphasizing charity rather than change, by focusing on noncontroversial issues, and by framing controversial issues in noncontroversial ways, educators forego many opportunities for meaningful, reflective analysis and transformative experiences -- the kind of analysis and experiences which might greatly enrich and change students' understandings of moral, political, and academic domains. By linking social analysis and action, service learning frameworks can facilitate powerful educational experiences for students.

Educators committed to a vision of service learning which embraces change rather than charity thus face a daunting dilemma. The widespread support for service learning in schools offers these educators an excellent opportunity. At the same time, using the calls for service learning in schools and the funds that support these initiatives to further their progressive agendas, may erode the broad based support for service learning which make their efforts possible. On many levels, then, there is a politics to service learning.

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